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Book Review: Beyond the Campus: Building a Sustainable University-Community Partnership, by Debra Harkins, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2013

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Book Review

***BEYOND THE CAMPUS: Building a Sustainable University-Community Partnership*, by Debra Harkins, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2013, 181 pp., \$45.99. 978-1-62396-241-8**

Beyond the Campus begins by humbly revealing the original intentions of the research team: to aid in an intervention to decrease violence between young children within an early learning center, and build a partnership between a university and the community in which co-created solutions would be made and implemented. Their claim: university-community collaborations can be beneficial to both partners and provide shared learning experiences. They found that youth violence in the early learning center was the result of a larger system issue in which power imbalances and competing interests were causing confusion and tension.

Part I of the book outlines the action-based theoretical approach that was used as the foundation of their project, followed by emphatically stating the need for universities to revisit their mission statements, in which civic engagement and responsibility are highlighted as crucial components of a college education. Part II details two drastically different types of teaching: traditional versus liberation approaches, and their relationship to the civic engagement movement that is being implemented at many universities. The authors argue that the traditional approach to learning perpetuates social inequalities, and that a liberation teaching approach in which students and teachers reciprocally enrich each other's experiences is much more appropriate in service learning classrooms. Finally, in Part III, the university research team addresses the fundamental lessons learned, successes, and shortcomings experienced during their partnership with the early learning center.

This book details the development and results of a university-community partnership in an extremely organized and concise way. The pedagogical nature of the study detailed in its subject matter is eloquently reflected in the design of the writing. Further, the authors brilliantly include the perspectives of students participating in service learning, faculty, staff, and teachers at the early learning center, providing a well-rounded understanding of the university-community partnership.

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The authors address the lack of civic engagement that is implemented at universities and the power struggles that exist between ‘privileged’ universities and the underserved communities. The authors do not, however, fully address the hierarchal power imbalances that exist across different universities. Although some universities may lack the ability to engage students in civic engagement due to a great emphasis on individual success, other universities simply cannot request the amount of time and dedication university-community partnerships require of their students. According to a recent government census, 71 percent of the nations college students were working in 2011, and roughly 50 percent of those students work over 20 hours per week for a large portion (27-59 weeks) of the year (U.S Census Bureau, 2012). The everyday demands of the average non-traditional or working college student may make community service learning initiatives difficult to implement at many universities.

As a current college student, I found this book particularly compelling because implementing service learning within universities would result in a more enriched learning experience with stronger possibilities for continued education. The comprehensive and detailed methods described in this book proved to be extremely effective when working in the early learning center with faculty and staff. Just as the authors suggest, a multitude of different professionals, staff, and researchers can benefit from applying the techniques drawn out in this book to their own partnerships. Overall, the authors make an extremely strong argument for the implementation of service learning programs in higher education.

Works Cited

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, October). *School enrollment and work status: 2011*. Retrieved September 10, 2014, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acsbr11-14.pdf>.